

Homily of Archbishop Philip Wilson
June 24, 2008 – Mass for CBC Christian Initiation
Gospel Reading Luke: 1:57—66, 80

My sisters and brothers,

Yesterday I flew back from New York and arrived here, I think, it's about 3 o'clock in the morning where I really am, but I'm really delighted to be back and to be able to celebrate these sacraments with you today and for these young men who are going to receive the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation and the young man to be received into the life of the church.

Over the past three weeks I have been living in New York and in the United States about two weeks ago a man died who became really quite famous because of the way in which he died and because of the nature of his life. He was one of the major political commentators in the United States. He ran a program since the early 1990's that was shown on American television every Sunday morning called "Meet The Press".

He was regarded as being one of the pre-eminent commentators on political life and this year had achieved a remarkable amount of interest from people because of the way that he was involved in the primary election between Hilary Clinton and Obama. Well, he died of a heart attack. Everyone was really surprised because they did not know that he was ill. But what was amazing in the light of his death and this happened even a couple of hours after he died, by 3 o'clock because he died at 1, in the afternoon, by 3 o'clock, people were reporting his death on national television and they interrupted programs in order to make statements about this good man who died.

So in the midst of a rather cut-throat world, from the very beginning, people spoke really well of him and as the weeks unfolded, and the people kept reflecting upon his life and talking about it, there were three factors that all where mentioned when they talked about him.

They said that in his work he was very professional. He worked really hard to do his job. He never did what he had to do that he wasn't well prepared. Secondly, they said that he was always fair. That no matter who he dealt with, in questioning and interviewing on his program that all of them were treated with respect. Certainly he asked hard questions, certainly he made his point, but there was nobody whoever complained about the way in which they had been treated by him. He always treated them with dignity and respect.

The third point that they had made about his life, was that he belonged actively to the Catholic faith. That he was a Catholic who lived out his faith, was a man of prayer, a man who experienced the life of the sacraments by going to mass regularly and by receiving the sacrament of penance. He was a man who didn't claim to be perfect, but who claimed that the only way in which he could live life was to live life in close union

with Christ. And that wherever he went and whatever he did, that those religious sentiments and those issues of faith were important to him and everybody knew it.

I would hope that when I die, that people may speak of me the way that they speak of him. Because I think in the package in which they describe him and talk about him and talk about their admiration for him, it's almost like the perfect summation of the life of the disciple of Christ. It's the results of his life are the ones that all of us should aim for in the ordinary circumstances of our daily lives. To live well, to do good and to be people of faith.

So you young men who are receiving these sacraments today, have the opportunity by opening your life to Our Lord and receiving the gift of life of Him and the gift of the Holy Spirit in Confirmation that in your own way you could be like that. To live a good life, to do good for others, to live out the life of faith and to depend upon Christ. Those factors are the ones that will give you real joy and happiness in your lives. Those elements of faith and of our union of Our Lord are the elements that give us peace and joy as we live in this modern world today.

So I ask you today as you receive these sacraments to do so with faith and in love. To welcome Our Lord and the gifts of the Holy Spirit into your lives that you might be prepared to take those gifts and to make them active and wonderful in the way that you live your life and in the things that you do.

When we look at you today, we see the great potential that you have as you grow and develop and move into adulthood in the world. The world needs you and the wonder and power that you have in your lives. To make a contribution by the way that you live and by the things that you do. But the world needs you above all, to be men of faith, to live in union with Our Lord and to make Jesus present in the world by the way that you live your daily life. And your commitment to Him in prayer, your willingness to be faithful to Him everyday, is the way which you would be able to establish that pattern in your life.

So I ask everyone who's here today to join with me in praying for these young men that, as they receive these sacraments tonight that they may be really overwhelmed in their lives by the love that Christ has for them. That they may make every effort in their lives to open their hearts to His love today so that they could be able to take these gifts of the Holy Spirit that they receive through the sacraments of Confirmation and make them practical and powerful elements of the way which they live their lives for Christ.

Our Baptism and Confirmation go together. We receive the gifts of the spirit both in Baptism and Confirmation. The gifts of the spirit that we receive in Baptism are the gifts that are necessary for all of us to do what is basically required of us by the Lord if we are to be His disciples.

There are some elements of life that are meant to be reflected in all of our lives as we stride to be the disciples of the Lord. And above all, that's meant to be characterised by our desire and our actions to love God and to love our neighbour. But the gifts of the spirit that we receive in Confirmation are even more extraordinary because they are designed

personally by God for every person who receives the sacrament. The gifts of the spirit that we receive in Confirmation are unique to each of us because in the midst of our discipleship of the Lord, there are responsibilities and opportunities that the Lord gives to each of us, that are not repeated in the lives of other people. And the gifts of the spirit that we receive in Confirmation enable us to do the unique and wonderful work that the Lord asks of us, as we live our lives as His disciples in the world.

All of this of course, is then celebrated in our lives over and over again when we come to mass and celebrate the Eucharist. We ask when we come to mass to be immersed again in the saving mystery of our Lord's death and resurrection. That the gifts of the spirit and life that we receive in Baptism and Confirmation may be more deeply placed in our lives by our experience of the presence of Christ in this celebration of mass.

So that when we repeat it over and over again in our lives that those gifts that we receive in Baptism and Confirmation can be more deeply rooted and more able to be powerful in our daily life and in the way which we strive to follow the Lord.

So, I pray and I ask that all of you pray that this will be the experience of these young men as they receive these sacraments tonight.